

Fouche House
619 Bourbon Street
New Orleans
Orleans Parish
Louisiana

HABS No. LA-1148

HABS
LA,
36 NEWOR,
78-

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Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

FOUCHÉ HOUSE

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This house is located in Square 72, Lot 23 of the Vieux Carré in the city of New Orleans, Orleans Parish, Louisiana. The street address is 619 Bourbon Street which is on the "lake" side of the street.

The present owner is Mrs. Marie Louise Pareti et als in care of Mrs. Maurice Taquino, 2403 Pine Street, New Orleans. It is empty and unused. The owner, however, has employed a local architect, Louis A. Goldstein, during the course of this survey, to prepare drawings for rehabilitating the property for joint commercial - residential use.

The building is significant as one of a type of unpretentious urban house designs in the French Quarter, comfortably adapted to a relatively narrow frontage of a little more than 23 feet. It evidences a strong French influence, having been designed by two outstanding architects of the period, Arsene La Carriere Latour and Hyacinthe Laclotte who maintained an atelier on Dauphine Street.

According to an announcement in the Louisiana Gazette, September 20, 1810, page 3, these gentlemen from France had formed a partnership "to undertake the building of all public and private edifices, to direct all kinds of building on adopted plans, to draw up estimates of works to be executed, according to the usages of the country and rules of art ----- in the newest taste, and according to the principles adopted in the Paris academy of fine arts, of which they are both pupils." Latour later gained fame as an engineer for General Jackson and Laclotte is also well known for his engraving of the Battle of New Orleans.

Part 1. Historical Information

In the absence of original drawings and contract documents, the physical history of the building must be construed from physical evidence and available material. Research which had been made earlier by Architect Samuel Wilson, Jr., New Orleans, has been loaned and freely adapted as the basis for this section of the report. Notarial Acts referred to may be found in the Notarial Archives, City of New Orleans.

The property together with buildings "built of wood" was purchased on January 31, 1810 (Stephan de Quinones, NP,) by Julie Bonne Fouché or (Foucher), a free woman of color from Demoiselle Amelie Salomon Hallines (or Palignes) who had inherited the property from her uncle, the noted Vincent Rilleaux, great grandfather of the French artist, Edgar Degas. The Josepha Lillie Map (Howard Tilton Library, Tulane University) dated 1810 shows the owner of this property to be Salomon at that time. The neighboring property was owned by Quinones who was the Notary for this sale. It was next acquired by Charles Hardy de Boisblanc (February 11, 1812, Marc Lafitte, NP.). Mention is made of the vendress "having had constructed the dependent house and buildings". This was the existing house which therefore may be dated between January 31, 1810 and February 11, 1812. The vendress also reserved the right to reclaim the house within six months which did in fact occur - for de Boisblanc died on March 20, 1812, shortly after the sale. His papers were inventoried with his estate (March 31,

1812, Marc Lafitte, NP). Attached to this Act is a letter addressed to the deceased by Sieurs A. Lre Latour and Laclotte, the twelve current, announcing that there remained due them a sum, not specified in the letter, for payment of construction of the house and for which Sieurs Latour and Laclotte were claiming privilege. The property evidently reverted to Julie Bonne Fouche¹ as the next record of sale (October 23, 1812, Marc Lafitte, NP) shows that Pierre Rogers acquired it from Julie Bonne Fouche¹. The Act contains the statement that "there likewise intervened the Sieurs Arsene Lacarriere Latour and Jean Hyacinthe Laclotte, both dwelling in this city, who have acknowledged having received from Julie Bonne Fouche the sum of one thousand four hundred dollars for payment of what was due them for the construction of the house above designated and for which sum they give by these presents good and valid quittance and discharge ---". It therefore beccmee apparent that Latour and Laclotte built this particular house. They evidently retained an interest in the property for they registered a note from Pierre Roger (November 24, 1812, Marc Lafitte, NP) "bearing obligation on the part of said Pieur Roger to sell to the bearer of the said signature note, for the sum of four thousand ninety six dollars, the house acquired by him from Bonne Fouche¹"

By another act the same day (November 24, 1812, Marc Lafitte, NP, Vol. 2, folio 235) Latour and Laclotte gave the note to their attorney, Dominique Seghers, the consideration being involved with the sale of a house on Dauphine Street (No. 633). On March 30 (or 20), 1813 Seghers acted on the note and purchased the house from Roger

(Marc Lafitte, NP). Etienne Plauche acquired it from Seghers (November 6, 1816, Marc Lafitte, NP). The property was sold at auction on December 15, 1818 to Mrs. R.O. Pritchard upon the death of Plauche and recorded by Act of Sale (Jan 14, 1819, Christoval de Armas, NP). The following notice of the auction which appeared in the Louisiana Gazette, November 23, 1818 gives us the first written description of the property:

" A Lot

Of 26 feet by 120 of depth, situated in Bourbon Street between St. Peter, Chartres (Toulouse) Streets with the two storied house thereon, composed of two large rooms and a gallery on the ground floor and four rooms on the first floor, wood balcony on the street and glazed gallery on the courtyard, and another building in the courtyard composed of a kitchen, cellar and chamber on the ground floor and three chambers on the upper story. The whole built of bricks and terraced roof, with wall, latrines etc, in the courtyard "

The major differences between this description and the house as it exists today are few. On the ground floor, the two rooms are now one. Also the gallery, which, in all probability, was open and accommodated the main stairway, has since been enclosed, a fireplace has been added, and the stairs removed. The second floor gallery is glazed as described above although the glazed opening has obviously been enlarged at a later date. Two rooms facing Bourbon Street on the second floor are now one large room. The only change in the slave quarter has been in the upper floor which now contains two instead of three rooms. Documentary evidence which would date these alterations has not been discovered.

The chain of title continues as follows: Wd. Charles Patton acquired from Mrs. Richard O. Pritchard (March 23, 1820, Christoval de Armes, NP); Wd. M. Smith acquired from Wd. Charles Patton (November 24, 1826, F. de Armas, NP); V. David acquired from Wd. Michael Smith (January 25, 1838, L.T. Caire, NP); Charles Caffin acquired from Victor David (September, 1838, Felix Grima, NP). It remained in the Caffin family through succession until it was purchased by J.M. Jaubault from Mrs. Wd. Charles Caffin, Jr. nee Darcantell (September 14, 1892, C.O.B. 146/370); Pascel Pareti acquired from Jean Marie Jaubault (March 26, 1895, C.O.B. 155/306). It has remained in the hands of the Pareti family since that date.

Other than references noted above, there is a feature story by Martha Samuels in the Times - Picayune, March 27, 1963.

Part 11. Architectural Information

The architectural character of this house indicates a strong French influence on the city residence of average size in the Vieux Carre. Typically, it contains rooms of modest size on two floors with a rear courtyard, shared by the slave quarter. The latter is built along a side property line which is perpendicular to the main house. Also typically of the early residential type in this section, this house shares a party-wall with the adjacent house on the right.

It has suffered greatly from a complete lack of maintenance in recent years, empty and progressively deteriorating. Therefore, the fabric is in generally very poor condition. Cracks have developed in the main brick bearing walls, floors and porch roofs have

rotted and there are large areas in the interior walls and ceilings where the plaster has fallen away. It should be noted that after this survey had commenced the owner called in a local architect to remodel this building.

The overall dimensions of the property, 28'- 5" x 127'- 5" (including party walls) in actuality provided complete interior and exterior living space enclosed by buildings and high walls. The main house is a rectangle approximately 28'- 0" x 44'- 8", and it is 26'- 6" high from the sidewalk to the tile which forms a wash for the cornice. A 5'- 6" wide enclosed stairway at the rear separates the house from the two-story slave quarter, which is 33'- 10" x 10'- 8".

Rising from foundations which are not accessible, both structures are built of soft red brick bearing-walls, which are plastered on both sides. Cement stucco has been applied to the exterior walls. The second floor and the roof framing members are wooden beams.

The gable roof of the main house has a relatively low pitch which would be typical of a roof which is used also as a terrace. It is now covered with tar paper and terminates at the front in a parapet-like lip approximately 2" high and 8" wide. Below this parapet and forming a wash for the cornice is a single course of green-glazed Spanish clay tiles which are probably original. The very limited space between the ceiling and the roof does not allow investigation of the roof members. Over the slave quarters there is a lean-to roof pitched toward the courtyard. It is finished with a recent built-up tar and gravel surface.

All that remains of a former balcony on the street facade are cantilevered iron bars which supported the former deck and the existing decorative wrought iron railing. At the rear there is a glazed two story porch with shed roof to enclose the stairway. Leading from the upper level of this porch there are the remains of a flight of wooden steps with six risers leading to an existing wood balcony which runs the length of the slave quarter. It is in very poor condition.

There are three plastered brick chimneys and evidence of a fourth one on the main house, and a single multiple - flue chimney on the slave quarter.

There are three arched openings on the street front, ground floor, the largest leading to the carriageway being 7'-11" wide.

It is closed with two doors, each having five panels on the exterior face and flush vertical boards on the inside face. There is a fan-opening above which is closed with a grating of iron rods. Adjacent to this door is the main entry door, 4'-8½" wide. Here on the exterior there are two double-hinged wood shutters with double-hinged strap hinges. The face consists of vertical boards, backed by diagonal boards on the interior. Behind the shutters are a pair of paneled doors. The lower panel is wood and the upper panel is glazed with 10 lights. The doors are equipped with wrought iron scrolled hinges on pintles. The third opening is a window closed with two double-hinged shutters made of vertical boards. The hardware is modern. Behind these shutters is a single fixed pane of glass, obviously modern. There is some evidence on the exterior that this

opening has been altered from an original doorway. Above the latter ~~the~~ openings there are glazed fan-lights. The remaining doors which lead to the exterior courtyard at the rear are of relatively recent date.

On the second floor front, there are three symmetrically placed full-length openings to the balcony. At these openings on the exterior there are double wood shutters. The upper half is fitted with adjustable wood louvers and the lower half consists of two panels on each face. Behind these are double doors, with the upper half glazed with ten lights and a single panel below. On the rear elevation upstairs there is a small six - light window in Room No. 3 and a large glazed arched opening on the gallery, Room No. 4. The arch appears to have been widened from the original fan which is now incorporated in the existing glazing. Incorporated also in the glazing is a door with a single wood panel below and fifteen glazed lights above. It is most probable that this large arched opening was glazed and the one below on the first floor was originally unglazed to form an open gallery.

In the slave quarter, facing the courtyard there are three doorways and two windows downstairs and three doorways and two windows upstairs on the balcony. None of these openings are vertically aligned. One doorway has a pair of vertical wood shutters and the other a two panel door, the upper panel being glazed. The remaining doorway and all the windows are now open except for one vertical wood shutter in one of the windows. Upstairs, the only existing closures are double vertical wood shutters in one door and in one window. Also in the slave quarter is a curious opening

in the wall downstairs and facing the house. This opening is filled in with a vertical wedge of bricks to form embrasure-like reveals. The two slits thus formed were probably for cross ventilation and privacy for this front room.

Besides the simply-profiled plaster cornice at the eave, the only other decorative exterior treatment is a flat raised band of stucco which frames each story.

The interior plan disposition of the house appears to have been quite simple and direct originally and has remained so. The first floor consists of the carriage-way on the right and presently one large room. There is physical and documentary evidence (See Appendix A) that this room was at one time a double parlor. There is presently one fireplace on the side wall of the front area and another fireplace on the corner of the rear area. The wood mantelpieces do not appear to be original. They probably date from the middle of the 19th century. At the rear there was an open gallery which, based on similar plans of the period, was used for the stairway. This gallery has now been enclosed and a fireplace with crude mantelpiece added. There is no trace of a stairway in this room now.

Existing stairs are located in an enclosed hall between the former gallery and the slave quarter. In the same area of the existing stairway are traces of a former stair which ended at the level of the slave quarter balcony which is lower than the second floor of the main house. It is logical to believe that there were two stairways, one for the family and a separate one for the domestics.

Upstairs, the existing stairs land on a glazed gallery (a later

addition) which in turn leads to what was the upstairs gallery. As described above, this gallery is also glazed and partitioned off into three rooms, the one over the carriage-way now equipped as a bathroom. Adjacent to this gallery are two rooms, each having a door to it and also a corner fireplace. The partition between these rooms is plaster on studs. The next and final room upstairs extends across the front of the house, opening to the front balcony with the three symmetrically placed doors. Again the documentary evidence (See Appendix A) and also the fact that one remaining ceiling rosette is off center leads to the conjecture that this was two rooms originally. There exists a single fireplace in this room which is directly in line with one below. There is visual evidence that there was another fireplace on the opposite wall and further evidence of a no longer existing chimney on the roof.

All upstairs floors in both structures are cypress boards approximately 11" and 12" wide. The floors downstairs are modern cement except in the carriage-way which has well-worn and rutted brick laid in a herringbone pattern. There is a brick gutter running the length of the party wall. All walls which are either brick bearing walls or stud partitions are plastered with a smooth finish.

There is a variety of interior doors. On the first floor there are two pairs of double doors leading from the large downstairs room to the carriageway. On the exterior they are closed with wood shutters, consisting of fixed louvers in the upper panel and a solid panel below. The interior doors here consist of a solid panel below a 3-light glazed panel above. Also in the carriage-way there is a

pair of two paneled doors leading to Room No. 2 and a modern glazed door with a glazed side-light leading to the existing stairway.

Between Room No. 1 and Room No. 2 there is a wide opening filled in with a single four-panel door with glazed side lights and a glazed fan light. Adjacent to it is a pair of double doors with a wood panel below eight glazed lights above. There is also a glazed fan-light above these doors. On the second floor the typical door is three-paneled with a transom above. Several of the interior doors are equipped with the typical scroll-type hinges. There are also several very early wrought iron locking bolts. The slave quarter has no interior openings.

Decorative wood trim consists of $10\frac{1}{2}$ " high base boards and moulded door trim. Three of the fireplaces have decorative wood mantelpieces. In addition, there remains two plaster ceiling rosettes.

Modern electric wiring has been installed in the main house only. Heating when the house was last occupied, appears to have been by coal burning grate installed in the fireplaces.

Like so many old houses in the French Quarter, especially on Bourbon Street, the Fouche house sits in the midst of commercial enterprises with "tourist - appeal", cheap gift shops, bars and the like.

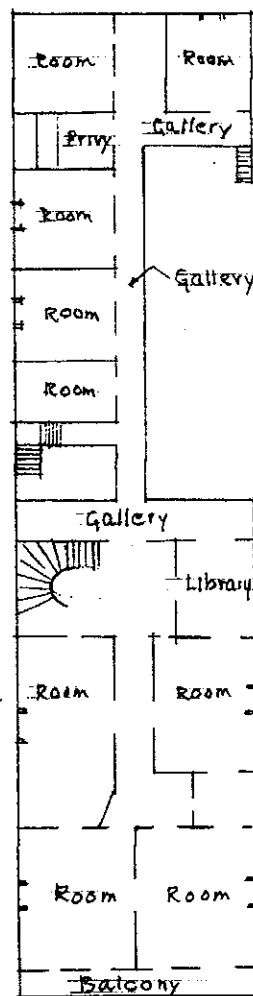
Typically, landscaping in the French Quarter was reserved to the rear courtyards. Although the entire courtyard of this house is brick paved, there are planting areas which have become a dense jungle of tropical growth evidencing the same lack of care that the structures have suffered.

Prepared by: Woodrow W. Wilkins, Architect
Summer HABS Team 1963

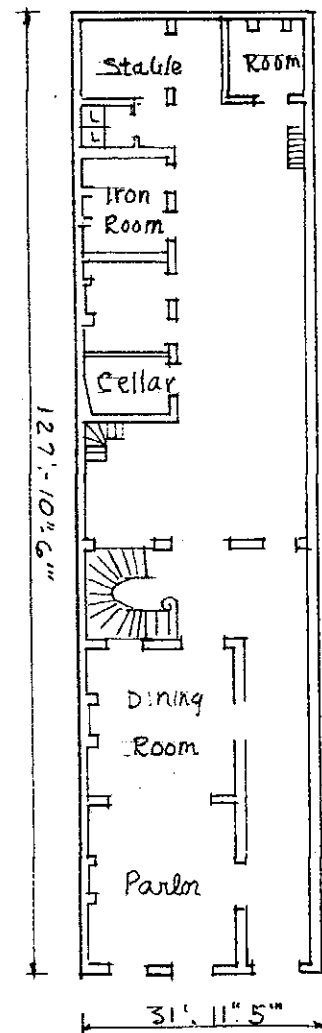
Edited By: Jack Barker, Jr., HABS Historian
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APPENDIX A

The plan below is taken from the Plan Book #45, Folio 65 located in the Notarial Archives, Civil Courts Building, New Orleans, La. It is dated May 24, 1860.



Second Floor



First Floor

A house on St. Peter Street, New Orleans, La. Note the similarity in general layout with the Fouché House